

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Luke 24:13-35 (EHV)

¹³ Now, on that same day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about all of these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing this, Jesus himself approached and began to walk along with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” Saddened, they stopped.

¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” he asked them.

They replied, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be condemned to death. And they crucified him. ²¹ But we were hoping that he was going to redeem Israel. Not only that, but besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Also some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning. ²³ When they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb. They found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.”

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and to enter his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village where they were going, he acted as if he were going to travel farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, since it is almost evening, and the day is almost over.”

So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and began giving it to them. ³¹ Suddenly their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. Then he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us along the road and while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?” ³³ They got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those who were with them assembled together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord really has been raised! He has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵ They themselves described what had happened along the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

Dear heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit on us so that in our times of sadness and distress we might recognise and receive joy from the real presence of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

It could be just one of us. Perhaps it's two of us. It's also possible we're all there.

In our text there were two. Two sad people. Two distressed people travelling from one place to another. Two people who would witness the risen Lord Jesus coming to them in Word and Bread.

However, every Sunday the same story occurs again and again. The only thing which changes is how many people take the same sad and distressed journey.

While the gospel reading told us about two people walking to Emmaus, our walks are to and from different places, such as:

A walk with a heavy heart from a frustrating day at work or home.

A lonely and fearful drive to the hospital or the cemetery.

A shuffle of bewildered feet from a doctor's surgery.

A troubled journey through strained relationships and their uncertain futures.

A stroll through memories of times past that can't be re-lived or undone.

A night-time filled the movement of tossing, turning, and tears.

The starting point doesn't matter. Neither does the destination matter. It's the same sad and distressed

journey that fills our hearts and minds as we grieve friends, family, relationships, health, abilities, dreams, or even faith. The sorrow we experience as we miss what's been (or what might have been), as we regret a hasty decision, or as we lament a moment of weakness.

The journey is a dreary trudge through our days where life seems dark and joyless.

Death still stalks us. Pain is still carried. Suffering still exists. Even the people of God aren't as perfect as we'd hoped. We looked for love coming to life, but we experienced something different. The hopes of a heavenly life on earth are shattered.

So, for one of us, two of us, or all of us, we look at our life and those around us through the haze of sorrow and depression. We see failure. We see the emptiness of lost joys in our life. We see division and separation. We see a diminishing future. We see suffering. We see death.

And then a strange man comes to walk and talk with us as we wearily plod from one place to another.

He's not who we were expecting. He certainly doesn't look like our Lord and Saviour; the one who we've been told has risen from the dead.

Like so many times before, our eyes deceive and distract us. Too often we see the wrong things, or we look for hope in the wrong places. But then again, if our eyes are the windows of our heart, and our hearts are filled with grief, sadness, frustration, and distress, then that's all we'll see.

But the man knows our *ears* are our *eyes* of faith, so he doesn't tell us to look. He tells us to listen.

And he says: "Listen to what God says in his Word."

So, we listen as the strange man explains how all of Scripture points us to Jesus and his saving work.

What we hadn't realized is that in all our depression and distress our thoughts had turned inwardly, but of course there's no hope there.

But here, as we listen to the living and Spirit-filled words which point us to our risen Saviour, we begin to discover hope outside of ourselves.

We thought we knew what God's Word said and meant, but as this strange man explains and expands on them, showing how they all point to the finished work of Jesus Christ, these ancient words seem to warm our hearts and bring a spark of hope back to life.

Where once we had only *seen* pain, suffering, and death, we now *hear* of forgiveness, victory and life!

In response, we want this strange man to stay a while longer to tell us more. Like clinging to a rope in hope, we ask him to remain with us. We want to hear more words so the small spark of hope and peace will help us move beyond our valley of the shadow of death into a rich experience of abundant life.

We invite him to stay for a while and sit down with us for a meal, eager to hear more words from him. But he does something unexpected and somehow familiar.

We invited him as our guest, but now he acts as our host. He takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to us. As we *listen* to his words we begin to *see* more clearly. We suddenly recognize our risen Lord and Saviour is here with us!

This means that today it no longer matters whether the man we see is familiar or not because the words are the same. The action is the same. Now we finally recognise our risen Lord Jesus himself is here with

us whenever we hear the same Word and participate in the same Supper.

Whether it's one of you, two of you, or all of you, the same journey is replayed every Sunday.

Sad and distressed people shuffling through physical, emotional, or spiritual journeys from one place to another. Although the struggles of faith in a life filled with so much suffering are personal, the journey is often common. Troubled people gathering together as you journey between your cradle and your grave, looking forward to the life promised beyond.

Now the man who speaks to you each week may not look like Jesus. In fact, he isn't Jesus! Yet somehow with the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus speaks through him.

By faith you hear, within the words of the sermon, Jesus' voice, speaking to you. You don't want to hear about the pastor's jokes or stories. Instead, you long for your pastor to carefully explain the words of Scripture in such a way it points clearly to Jesus in order to enlighten your heavy hearts with hope and peace.

In this way, the Word of God, read and expounded through the words of the sermon, re-enact the first part of the Emmaus journey *every Sunday*.

But in a similar way, the Lord's Supper re-enacts the second part of the Emmaus journey *every Sunday* (well, at least when you have a pastor present).

While the face of the one speaking the words that Jesus spoke may not look like Jesus' face, the words and actions are still the same. Jesus still takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it...to you.

The Word made flesh comes as your host to feed you with his very body and blood to forgive your sins and nourish your flagging faith.

You come in ones and twos and more to kneel at Jesus' feet and receive his gifts of grace and love. Listening to the words, your ears are convinced you don't travel alone. In your sadness and in your distress, Jesus is here...with you...to feed you, nourish you, and revive your flagging spirits.

This is how Jesus continues to accompany Emmaus wanderers, giving you what you need to strengthen your faith as you travel through your troubled lives.

He knows what you need is the Word of God proclaimed, explained, and enacted. He knows you need the presence of his body and blood to nourish his pilgrim people.

Today Jesus continues to speak to pilgrim travellers through Christian worship which is purposely structured around the Emmaus journey of Word and Sacrament.

Here your risen Lord continues to speak his grace-filled and effective words in your worship, teaching you how he has come to fulfill everything that was spoken about him. Here your risen Lord continues to feed his people on their journey of faith through word-enriched bread and wine which also becomes his body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

By ones and two and three and more, formerly sad and distressed people, touched by the Word and the Supper of the living Christ, go back out into the world ready to share what you've seen and heard to help other sad and distressed people by pointing them to the same Jesus Christ – still living and very much active in your lives today.

So, whether it's one of you, two of you, or all of you, may...

...the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ

Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Stuart Kleinig
South Burnett Lutheran Parish
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